

# **Play with Me: Everyday Things to Do with Your Preschooler**



April 18-30, 2004

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has issued an initiative encouraging parents and preschool teachers to spend time developing our preschoolers' minds and bodies in preparation for reading and going to school. As a parent, you are your child's very first teacher. Through playful activities, you can not only have fun with your child, but you can increase his/her ability to become a reader. Children go through many developmental stages between the ages of one and five. The learning activities suggested in this booklet can be modified to meet your child's needs. Many resources are available at your public library to help you raise a reader. Ask your children's librarian for help. The ability to read is one of the most precious gifts any parent can give a child.

## LANGUAGE AWARENESS

To encourage letter recognition, listening skills, creative expression, and following directions, try the following:

- Read often to your child. Take advantage of when *your child* is willing to cuddle and listen to a story.
- Start with board books, which have cardboard pages, simple text and brightly colored pictures. They are just the right size for the very young.
- Talk about how a book is made. Show the front and back and explain that stories have a beginning and an end. Discuss the pictures. Let your young one help you hold it and turn the pages.
- After reading the story, talk about it. Let your child tell *you* the story! As you read a story, see if your child can predict what will happen next. If the story has repetitious lines, have your child join in.
- On different days, choose a letter of the alphabet. Look for that letter in street signs, on buildings, on items in the kitchen cupboards, while shopping, reading books and magazines. Ask what the letter sound like and looks like. Draw it in sand or flour.
- Take an old magazine and cut out letters to spell your child's name.
- Print your child's name and let him/her find and match the letters by using letter magnets or alphabet blocks. Make your own letter flash cards.
- Take construction paper and using glue, print your child's name. Sprinkle glitter over it. Once dry, let your child feel his/her name as well as see it spelled.
- Talk about favorite animals or a pet. Spell the animal's name. Talk about what it eats, where it lives, how it moves. Imitate what sounds it makes.
- Sing a favorite song; change the lyrics of the song (instead of 5 little monkeys, sing 5 little teddy bears). Make up a song.
- Use a play telephone and talk to each other.
- On a special day, call a grandparent and let them talk with your child.

## IMAGINATION, MEMORY, SPATIAL AWARENESS, CAUSE AND EFFECT

- Use paper lunch bags to make puppets.
- Pretend to be an animal. Pretend to walk like it and sound like it.
- Give your child a straw. Ask what else it could be used for. (wand, fishing pole, musical baton, etc.)
- Make a silly wig by attaching crepe paper or yarn to a band of paper or a paper plate that has its middle cut out. Ask your child who might have such hair.
- Cover a table with a sheet or blanket and pretend it is a cave, house, airplane, etc.
- Create funny creatures using toothpicks and marshmallows or cubes of cheese.
- Have a pretend tea party, decide who will be invited and what will be served?
- Form a marching band using kitchen pots and pans, bowls and spoons for instruments. March through the house.
- At one of your meals, leave something off the table that is always there and see if your child can figure out what it is.
- Make cards with pictures of your family members. Name the family members.
- Use 3x5" cards and make sets of matching pictures or stickers. Mix them up, turn them over and have your child find the matching sets.
- Make a sound and have your child guess what it is (train whistle, lion growling, etc.)
- Lay out different objects and have your child look at them. Cover them up and then see how many items your child can remember.
- With your child, construct a train from old boxes. Talk to your child about what kind of train it is and where it is going.
- Stack bowls, measuring cups or boxes so they fit into each other.
- Compare lengths of different objects and talk about which is longer and shorter.
- Compare weights of different objects and talk about which is lighter and heavier.

## SIZE AND SHAPE RECOGNITION

- Look for different shapes in books and magazines.
- Cut a sponge into different shapes and let your child make pictures or designs using a stamp pad and the sponge shape. Different colored stamp pads are ideal for this activity.
- If making pancakes, pour the batter into different shapes.
- Walk in a circle, in a square, in a triangle. Ask which way is easier.
- Find different shapes while in the grocery store, on a drive, while walking outside, or in your house.
- When making your child's sandwich, use a cookie cutter to create different shapes.
- Buy or make a shape sorter cube. Have your child decide which shapes go through which holes.

## COLOR RECOGNITION

- Read a book such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin or *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh, and talk about the different colors. Ask what colors mix to make purple, green or orange?
- While in a parking lot, have your child point to different colored vehicles (a red car, a blue truck, a white van, etc.)
- Talk about the colors you see while in the store, when picking out an outfit to wear, and while making/eating meals.
- Take pieces of color paper and print the names of the color on the paper.
- Arrange several different pieces of colored paper and have your child match a toy to the sheet of paper (Example: red car to red paper, yellow crayon to yellow paper).
- Take a round lid and draw a line of circles with edges touching. Let your child make each circle a different color. Add antennae and legs. Now you have a caterpillar!

## SORTING AND PATTERNING

- Have your child help you sort the laundry.
- On a walk, pick up stones or leaves, etc. and sort them by shape or size.
- Let your child help you set the table. He/she can sort the silverware.
- Sort loose change (coins) with your child.

- Gather some shoes, slippers and boots. These can be sorted by type of shoe, who the shoe belongs to, size of shoe, color of shoe, etc. Be creative and add some doll shoes.
- Sort other clothing such as mittens, hats, t-shirts.
- Line items in a pattern and see if your child can repeat the pattern (for example: cup, spoon, napkin, cup spoon, napkin)
- Cut shapes (circles, squares, and triangles) from colored construction paper. Your child can sort by shape and color. Make it harder by cutting small, medium and large sizes of the shapes. Sort by shape, size and color.
- Mix different kinds of pasta in a large bowl. Let your child sort the various pastas.
- Blindfold your child and let him/her smell different foods. As if he/she can identify the smells? Try tastes.
- Make flash cards with words and pictures that can be combined into compound words. (gold, fish, bowl, sea, shell, shore, tooth, brush, pick, eye, lid, air, plane, butter, fly, dog, house, etc.) Experiment by putting different combinations together.
- Play "Follow the Leader", "Mother May I", or "Simon Says"
- Have your child tell you what his/her favorite part of the day was.
- Make rattles from envelopes, cups/lids, and boxes. Listen to the different sounds they make.
- Listen to sounds inside or outside the house. Ask what is making those sounds. Have your child make up a story about one of the sounds.
- Have your child make up a storybook. Instead of coloring all the pictures, make collages using different textures such as wax paper, fur, velvet, feathers, sandpaper, corrugated paper, corduroy.
- Read stories that rhyme. See if your child can predict what the next rhyming word will be.
- While waiting in a line, sing a favorite song
- Look at a family photo album and tell stories about the pictures.
- As the seasons change, talk about other changes that occur. Ask what happens outside, what happens inside, what different clothes are worn.
- Play "I Spy".
- Make cookies, or something to eat and read the recipe together. Talk about how to mix

the ingredients and what order they are added.

- Make a shopping list together. When at the grocery store, talk about shapes, textures and colors of items.
- Don't be afraid to use many different words with your child. Most children enter school knowing between 3,000 to 5,000 words. You will be the one who teaches the most words to your child!

## **COUNTING AND NUMBER RECOGNITION**

- With your child, count how many fingers and toes he/she has. Play "This little piggy went to market". Count other body parts...nose, ears, etc.
- When your child is brushing his/her teeth, count how many teeth he/she has.
- Look for different numbers on houses, street signs, license plates, buildings, and in stores, books and magazines.
- Talk about how many people are in your family and in your extended family?
- Use blocks to build a tower. Count the number of blocks it takes.
- Write the numbers 1-10, or cut them out. Glue them on paper. Have your child count items (blocks, shoes, cereal, etc.) and place them by the correct number.
- When grocery shopping, have your child help you count the number of items you are buying...the number of apples, boxes of cereal, etc.

## **BODY AWARENESS**

All children need to develop: eye-hand and foot-hand coordination, fine and gross motor coordination, as well as a sense of balance, tactile stimulation, creative movement, and sensory exploration. The following can be used to promote these skills:

- Show how to clap. Advance clapping to a rhythm while counting.
- Point to different body parts while playing in front of a mirror. Make funny faces. Take turns winking.
- Play peek-a-boo and hide and seek.
- Tip-toe, march, leap, hop, take giant steps.
- Balance on one foot. Practice skipping.
- Hold a hoola hoop vertically and have your child crawl through it. Lay the hoola hoop on the floor and have your child walk over it, jump over it, leap over it.
- Put a large sheet of paper on the floor. Have your child lay on it and draw an outline around him/her. Together, add physical details (nose, eyes, hair, and clothes).
- Draw pictures together. Use crayons on paper, chalk on the driveway or sidewalk. Trace around leaves or common household items like a spoon or make rubbings with a piece of paper and the flat side of a crayon.
- String pasta, cereal or cut-up straws to make necklaces.
- Pick up different toys or objects with tongs.
- Feel different textures around you and talk about them. Bowls are smooth, sandpaper is rough, a stuffed animal or pet is furry, satin is soft, etc. Walk barefoot on carpeting, grass, and concrete.
- Play Simon Says with body parts.
- Draw a blank face and let your child fill in the features.
- Trace your child's shoes or feet to make "footsteps" from colored paper. Lay them in a pattern and have your child follow the footsteps. Have your child name the colors as they step on them.
- Use or make play dough. Squeeze it, roll it, make shapes.